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July 10, 1963

Dr. Harold Brown
Director of Research and Engineering
Department of Defense
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Harold:

I am doubtless poking where I have neither information nor warrant to, but I could not help reacting to the outcome summarized in the attached clipping. I am well aware how little I know about it, but your conclusion about "premature system-oriented hardware" fits exactly the impressions I had to draw when I stumbled on the problem in looking for analogues to infrared reconnaissance of Mars. I was absolutely dumb-struck by how little attention was being paid to the necessary fundamentals - as far as I know it still remains true that we have a better global infrared reflection spectrum of Mars (Sinton) than we do of the earth!

I have been very well impressed by the efforts that IR research groups have made to maintain effective communication, but I still wonder if a good large part of the problem does not stem from too sensitive a security classification of work in this area. You may have good reason to support such a classification, but the considerations outlined in the summary of your testimony would seem to point in the opposite direction. Against the "costs" of a much more liberal classification policy would be the following advantages:

1. Very interesting research and civilian applications of now classified IR technology, and
2. Much broader scientific scrutiny of the fundamentals of which this weapons system must be based. For example, our discussions on IR reconnaissance of Mars have repeatedly alluded to classified image tube developments which it was not practicable to pursue further because of their classification.

There was one consideration which was not alluded to in your testimony, and this is the probable importance of a Midas system in arms control. It seems to me very important that we do lay the necessary technological basis for this type of reconnaissance, even if the momentary application to more plausible defense needs is as flimsy as it is here. This application would lend further weight to the security position outlined in the previous paragraph.

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You will of course know the countervailing arguments.

With best wishes,

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics